

## EDITORIAL

“JUST KEEP YOUR LEGS CROSSED.” That advice, and the appearance of a box of Kotex on my bedside table, was the sum total of sex education in my house. Thankfully, I had the schoolyard, where my friends and I spent most grade-six lunch hours clustered under the bushes reading aloud from a dog-eared copy of Judy Blume’s *Forever*. A tubby, bookish child, I still remember the promise and the thrill of the opening line: “Sybil Davison has a genius I.Q. and has been laid by at least six guys.”

Thanks to Judy Blume, my friends and I learned about the pill and we learned that men name their penises. (There is a generation of women who have to work very hard not to giggle when they hear the name “Ralph.”) We learned to drop phrases like “wet dream” or “breaking her cherry” into conversation. But we didn’t know what they meant. At least I didn’t. I was pretty sure that masturbation did *not* cause blindness, but I was too scared to find out, and I suspected that standing up during sex did *not* prevent pregnancy, but, then again, I was *quite sure* that standing up while you had sex was impossible. Of course, it never occurred to me to ask someone. That kind of vulnerability was unthinkable. My friends and I guarded the dirty secret of our naiveté with everything we had, and our carefully cultivated insouciance was interrupted only when we rushed to laugh at double entendres that we barely understood (or when we met an adult called Ralph).

Last week, thirty-five thousand Ontario parents expressed their opposition to the province’s new sex-ed curriculum by keeping their children out of school. Over a thousand people attended a Queen’s Park rally, and many carried placards demanding “Math Not Masturbation.” Whether it’s an either/or proposition I cannot say, but the new curriculum does promise an informed and age-appropriate discussion of masturbation, as well as sexual identity, sexting and informed consent, a concept that would have been utterly foreign to me at twelve and only slightly less surprising at twenty. In following the debates, I was thus struck by an editorial that referenced an article in the *London Review of Books* wherein Jenny Diski

describes being raped as a teenager: “I was neither dazzled nor drugged into sex when I was 14—I was embarrassed into it.”

As the parent of studiously world-weary but perpetually mortified pre-teens, I am increasingly aware that being disinclined to talk about sex is as dangerous as it is natural, and so rather than protecting my children’s right to not know, I responded to the news of the sex-ed protests this way: I told them about reading *Forever* and laughingly remembered Ralph, and then, in homage to Judy Blume, I gathered them around the dinner table, and read aloud Rebecca Păpucaru’s hilarious poem “If I Had Your Cock,” which is contained in this issue. Whether or not my eleven-year-old fully appreciated the reference to “invisible ink,” he laughed so hard that milk poured out his nose. And that’s a good thing.

Carrie Dawson

Editor